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CHRIST IN ITALY

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CHRIST IN ITALY

BEING THE ADVENTURES OF A MAVERICK AMONG MASTERPIECES

BY

MARY AUSTIN

AUTHOR OF "LAND OF LITTLE RAIN,"
"LOST BORDERS," "THE ARROW MAKER"

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The Song of the Maverick.

I am too arid for tears, and for
laughter
Too sore with unslaked desires.
My nights are scanty of sleep
And my sleep too full of dreaming;
The frosts are not cold enough
Nor the nights sufficiently burning:
The hollow waves are slack
And no wind from any quarter
Lifts strongly enough to outwear me.
My body is bitter with baffled lusts
Of work and love and endurance;
As a maverick, leaderless, lost from the
herd,
Loweth my soul with the need of man-
encounters.

For I am crammed and replete
With the power of desolate places;

THE SONG OF THE MAVERICK

I have gone far on faint trails
And slept in the shade of my arrows;
I have thrown Death and laughed
And bid him up and come at me.
Patience, forgiveness and might
Ache in me, finding no egress,
And Virtues stale that are too big for
the out-gate.

I would run large with the man-herd,
the hill-subduers;
I would impress myself on the mould of
large adventure
Until all deeds of that ilk
Should a long time carry
The stripe of the firstling's father.
For I am anguished with strength,
Over fed with the common experience;
My feet run wide of the rutted trails
Toward the undared destinies.
(From the Book of Medicine Songs).

PREFACE.

A Maverick, you understand, has no brand or mark. He is a strayed and unparented yearling overlooked in the annual round-up, and thereafter whoever first gets an iron on him claims him for his own.

The range in the west is wide; trails entice from it toward lovely, unforgettable places. Long ago, as long as when my class pin was new and the ribbon of my diploma not faded, I walked in one of those trails. It began in a country of fawn and silver swells that flowed and melted into ranks and ranks of hills and took on shadows of blueness. I remember how the fields on either side it smouldered with the burnt gold of poppies. . . . .

It was a trail that led far and opened on incredible sights: sunk rivers, crawling dunes, also many delectable meadows under high, unappeasable, glacier polished Sierras. Wild things walked in it: deer shifting their feeding ground, bobcats, coyotes and furry, rat-tailed things whose moonlight friskings made lacy patterns on the sand, sheepherders, pocket hunters, Indians and gods. Notably it led to the river of Hassayampa.

Hassayampa goes round and about Lost Borders; it flows and sinks and rises again in unnamed cañons, loops about desert ranges and is lost in the sand. Only Indians know where to find it with any certainty. Once there was a White man who thought he could guide people to its shallows—but that was a long time ago and he has been judged

quite harmless. Nevertheless many people passing through that country have drunk of it; they do not always know it themselves, but their friends know it by the change that comes over their minds.

What happens to you if you have drunk Hassayampa is that all place and time dissolve, so that if you should see, for example, a young girl with the shadow of dreaming in her eyes, working purple roses on centre pieces and making embroidered pillow shams, you would see much more besides: maidens spinning and spreading flax upon the grass, Indian women weaving baskets; savage women beating fibre from the palm, wild birds that gather down,—sea birds that take it from their breasts, and mothering ewes that tread out grassy hollows; lift and urge of the world.

It is to be one for the instant with the impulse that disposes maids and mating creatures to the handling of soft, enhancing fabrics—and to understand what it is still in the woods that turns the mind to prayer . . . and why the skipping child cuts off the sense of his words to fit them to the tune of his twinkling legs. It is to find no things inconsiderable or mean and few things ridiculous. *This* it is to drink Hassayampa; but if you are sensible you do not always speak of it.

This is also one of the things which is likely to happen to Mavericks, for the river does not flow through the man-herd. It is important to remember that it had already happened to me when I came back to the round-up and discovered myself without a brand of

any description. And society had its iron out for me, you may be sure! What they missed most in me, particularly when I came to talk of those things of which, considering the profession I was struggling to adorn, I might be considered to know somewhat, was the mark of having been to Europe. Now I was perfectly willing to believe that the answers to many questions I had put to myself in the Wilderness, were to be found in Milan or Munich; but I thought it singular that when I put the simplest of them, say, why the chorus of comic opera was never able to get away from the movement of savage dance called the "squaw step," or what accounted for the double perspectives of Turner, the Already-Branded didn't know the answers to that any more than I did—except the

few who having spent as much as four days in the National Gallery, denied that there were any double perspectives. They looked annoyed and said I really ought to have a few years abroad. All of which made me secretly afraid to go lest I should come back with the mark of not being able to know, which is more damning than no mark at all. One characteristic of this particular brand, the brand of Having-Been-There, is a disposition to be portentiously judicious about the performance of imported music, drama and the like, and a fear in respect to the native product, of not being judicious enough. To come back to the bourgeoning field of American Art with that burned into you would be very like being forbid to walk in a garden because you couldn't tell which of the green heads coming up

in it were to be peonies and which pumpkins, and any kind of a garden is to me a great exhilaration.

I believe in spite of the pull of curiosity I should have been afraid to venture if it hadn't been about that time for the opinion of several professional gentlemen that I probably wouldn't live long enough afterward for any harm to come of it. Of course these gentlemen had forgot that for as long as they had been studying the causes that induce death, I had been studying the forces that make life, and were so impressive about it that for the time I forgot it myself and believed them—at least I didn't care whether they were to be believed or not. I was so convinced of going on after it, that I thought to pass through the experience called dying might prove interesting

and even advantageous. As near as I could guess from predelection, I should go on as the guardian spirit of a little forest of silver firs in an easterly lap of the Sierras where in January the drifts are forty deep and in June the air is odorous and hot with the breath of saxifrage and penstemon. There I should shake out the sapling firs from the clogging snows, keep the deer from trampling the white lupins along the creek, and manifest as a blue shaft of light in the green and windy glooms. There was certainly nothing in that to be hurt by a trip to Italy! And I was curious to see what it would do to me.

How I came to write a book about it was simpler even than that. Behind me I had left a friend or two who really cared what I thought, and there wasn't enough of me left to write letters. It

seemed easier to buy one of those delightfully blank and vellum covered volumes they offer you in the *Via Rondinelli*—and a book once written, there are so few people who are able to refrain from publishing it!

Just precisely what I brought out of Italy over and above what you have here in the book, is leave and license to go on being a Maverick. They were mostly Mavericks themselves, the old Masters, breaking their own trails. As for the properly branded you can find them, any number of them in the catalogues under the caption *Scuola di* ————. I'll warrant *they* could have told you what was proper to be thought about Raphael and Michael Angelo as well as a guide book. It came out for me very clearly that much of what people find in Europe is just as much in evidence in

the art exhibition of the County Fair and the Forest Theatre, or whatever local instance of the far divided root of vital art impulses. The difference is whether you are looking four hundred years forward from them or four hundred years back. There are just as badly drawn and as preposterously painted pictures in the Ufizzi as in Kalamazoo. There are also much better things,—things benumbing in their excellence. What you get out of them all is largely a matter of having drunk Hassayampa. I am not sure that a very great work of art is ever illuminating. In it the soul is bathed as in the essence of a god, vitalised, renewed; but for intimations of the processes something is required over which the mind can not skid on the surfaces of an overwhelming perfection.

I don't myself see anything to regret in the great number of people who can still get something out of chromos; provided they get it. I met a great many of my countrymen abroad who thought they were being nourished by Art when in fact they were only drunk upon it. It is the courage to understand a coloured lithograph even though I have lost the taste for them, which I have brought back out of Italy. You would not believe it unless you had seen it, how many people there are who think they cannot see a great picture except they have a book at hand which says, "the figure in the foreground has his right arm raised, and an expression of great solemnity; observe the rich red of the draperies." But if it came to them as a chromo they would make no such difficulty. If you live within solid

walls, four-squared, there is an advantage of course in a framed up solid window, appropriately draped and decorated, glazed if you will so that nothing can blow in to you while you look out. But how if you live all open to the airs of heaven? Isn't it rather ridiculous then to brick up out of nice little red Baedeckers, a place to look out of? And to go craning your necks out of the traditional opening to look back on the beginnings of Art at home is intolerable!

It seemed worth while to put on record that the window is really only the shape of a window built up in airy space through which pass and repass light and the fluid soul of Life. The best you could get out of my book on Italy would be the certainty that no book about it is really indispensable.

CHRIST IN ITALY

I believe that the ills of this world are remediable while we are in the world by no other means than the spirit of truth and brotherliness working their lawful occasions among men. I believe in Here and Now.

I believe in Man and the Friend of the Soul of Man and I am unconvinced of Death.

I

I DO not know why it should have seemed a startling discovery, nor why I should have gone to Italy to make it, nor indeed, if it were the fact which startled or my being willing to confess to it, but the first discovery I made there was that I am not a Christian. Mind, it has been twenty years since I kept its Shibboleths and remembered days, or failed to realise, whenever it came by way of my intelligence, that I have not lived in a Christian time nor a Christian country, but this is the first of my denying the term for myself without shamefacedness. And when I speak of Christ I mean the very man as Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote him,

as these old Romans read him before ever there was a doubt of the scriptures or the higher criticism had been introduced; no modern composite of every man's notion of an acceptable Godliness; not even as he was presented to my youth by his ministers of a church that signified its appreciation of redemption from Sin by a great particularity of behaviour,—pragmatical, thumping the pulpit cushions, leaning out of high Heaven to begrudge me the joy of a blossomy meadow because it fell on a Sunday. Nor have I at any time accepted him of the Church-of-Whatever-Makes-You-Most - Comfortable, brought to the people (whereas formerly they brought the people to Christ), dressed out in whatever moral attitude is the mode; wherein the best preacher is a good showman, crying his

wares in a taking way. "Only come," says my cousin Churchly, "and hear our new minister," and I do. He is a personable man who preaches a smiling Christ and the obligation of cheer. Then I look in the Book and find that Jesus sought doctrinal disputations; he wept, gave way to invective, laid about him with a whip, sweat blood and cried out on God in his despair; but cheerfulness in my cousin Churchly's generation is very much the fashion.

Nor do I mean that Christ of letters whom many sincere apologists (say Renan) have blown out through knowledge with the breath of sentiment, a shining irised bubble till it broke and vanished in thin air, but this same Christ of Cimabue, of Giotto and Girlandjio, who was born of a Virgin, crucified, dead and buried, the third day he rose from

the dead and ascended into Heaven.

Understand that of all men had drawn of a Redeemer I knew no more, until now, than what came to me of a sternly Protestant, beauty-beggared line: Some pale replicas, a head by Da Vinci, or a Raphael Madonna framed in black, high up on a library wall. And in the wilderness where I went, he was not—as if he could not be in any place where the faith of men had not borne him; as if his image could not be cast except on the fume of burning hearts as on the thick smoke of an enchanter's screen.

There was God there; personalities and powers moving in the unshadowed space between the mighty ranges, moving and discernible in the ultimate processes of men; but the Son was away in

places where they had more need of him. Time by time when the humanity which lay so close there in the hollow lap of life, rooted and wallowed and stretched itself at ease, shot up from some pricked sorrow a transient jet of agony, you saw it shape to a faint intimation of the Deliverer; and once I saw him walking on the day they buried Relles Carrasco.

That year an extraordinary sickness had sprung up in Tonopah where there were new mines opened and men run together from all the west to snatch at the disembowelling of that district, themselves snatched by the fever. They walked about on a day, shuddered with the stroke, and the third were buried. If one opened his mouth to question who would be the next, the sickness leaped down his throat and answered

him, and those running from it brought it to our district on their backs. All that cold weather there were watchers by roadside fires lest the Doctor's buggy should go by them in the night, and forked sticks set up by unnamed crossings with a word that he was wanted urgently at a ranch fifty miles away, or at a solitary mine back of Waban.

After some weeks of this, when the Doctor had also taken the pestilence, Carrasco nursed him, and after the Doctor's recovery, fell ill of the strain and died. They carried him to Lone Pine for burial with such poor honour as the town could afford, because of what he had done, and I had gone down with what I had to offer—a handful of pale lilies nursed carefully to bloom in a dish on the window ledge, where no

flowers could bloom else for three hundred miles until after rains.

I can see the land now as it looked that day, the hills desertward lying very low, shrunken and withered with the cold, chilly shadows cowering in the washes, the road south winding blankly between reaches of stubby, leafless sage, the cold dust rising heavily behind the team.

I saw the procession tail out beyond the pine cabins and the unkempt yards, walking with a little space between it and the coffin, for respect you would say,—but I saw in the hard light of mid-morning that a figure filled it, walking steadily, the white robe falling straight and mingling with the white blurr of the dust, nothing whiter than the pearled shadows of the snows on Kearsage. And when the custodian had

turned his silver paper screen on the wall of the cloister, I knew it for that very Christ that the Beato Angelico saw walking in the garden on the morning of the resurrection, this wan dreamer of Del Sarto, this pitiable bleeding Christ of the Cinquecento, whom now that I have seen neither have I believed.

Yet when I looked in the Book I think they read it with a genius for conviction, the word being made flesh in them and their living saints.

They conceived Christ as continent, self-despising, turning the cheek to the smiter, and taking no thought for tomorrow's bread. When they wished to know what Christ was like in the Cinquecento, they did in his manner: espoused poverty, denied themselves even

to a clean shirt and the enjoyment of the taste of food, got themselves extremely ill used of their fellows. They had no use, you may be sure, for the Philologist. And striving so to outbear the passions of a Redeemer these artist martyrs,—for what was it Stephen and Peter and the rest were about but painting the likeness of Christ in blood and fire?—became themselves as in the use of flesh in great agony. There were such bloodless pallors, such sunken hollows in thy frame, O Blessed Brother of San Marco!

But here pushed to its literalist all the tender adornment of Christology, all the bright toy balloons sent up to fix our attention on the upper air, dropped earthward. If I wasn't able to accept on the evidence of Raphael, Titian and Domenichino, the deification of piti-

ableness, judge how I stood toward the Annunciations, the Nativities—fat-footed angels choiring from stable roofs; those regal connections of the Medici's travelling to Jerusalem through the hill country of the Ricardi chapel!

Here at the evidence of belief falling flat over its own defences, something clicked in me to shift the centres of conviction.

When I was a little cured of what I had taken up to excess, the surpassingness of Art—of which you can find more than enough in books for that purpose provided—I was able to see that very much the same thing that prevented me from the bleeding Christs, lay at the bottom of my dissatisfaction with the young Marys. Beautiful, oh, beautiful with that delicate luminous quality so

often attractive to men in young girls, which comes chiefly of having nothing behind it, like the hollow cup of a flower, but striking vague resentments from the surface of our common life. For plainly, what the artists had been about was the rendering of immaculacy in an age which could not and a country which does not yet practically conceive purity as being anything more than absence of occasion. It comes to me strongly among the Madonnas of the Pitti that there is some profounder matter than custom in the tendency of people by whom a woman is most worshipped, to count the virtue of women so frail a quality as to be breathed upon by the mere man-presence, something that makes it no astonishment to find great meticulacy about feminine behaviour in the preëminence of a Holy

Family, kept holy on the condition of its not being really a family.

It was here in the mazed girl mothers of Jesus; at the best the painters could show them, vessels thinned to frailness by the inundation of a mystery, at the least, bolstered by saints and symbols, mere pretty unknowingness, like that one of Lippi's who looks quite unintelligent enough to give a child of that age a pomegranate to eat without in the least considering whether it was good for it. It was easier if I was to admit a woman among my Blessed Personages to take the long leap that Raphael and Titian took to the Madonna of the Assumption, to the Stabat Mater, even to that Mary of Marconi's in the middle of a charming landscape looking with infinite, informed relief at a Son, who, though too pretty, has died at peace;

much easier than to make terms with the girl mothers on the basis of my child having come to me by the common way any less purely than her solemn bambino growing dim with candle smoke. For I could not take it motherly of her, hardly humanly concerned even, that she should sit so smiling and apart when outside in Italy there were pregnant women working in the fields and hardly a child that ran in the street but had under its eyes the dark circles of malnutrition.

There are a great many of my country women coming and going about Italy, who have made a little god of Pleasantness and worshipped him by the abnegation of all unhappy appearances; account for poverty and untended illness as a necessary discipline for other

people; will not look on death any more than Saint Louis would on a woman. They turn life from their doors unless it knocks with a pleasing countenance, and put a man on the way to their favour through as many postures of sentiment as a Dervish celebrating his god; fear to have children except in the midst of such millinery as muffles its primal significance; to whom expectancy is only saved from being an offence by the complicity of the dressmaker.

The case is simply that some man having pulled the shield of life about with its shining side toward them, they mistake its burnish for the reflection of their quality, and dare not peer too much about the edges on those who, by the strength with which the shield is grasped, must continually suffer its reverse, lest what they see upsets their

faith that "All's well with the World," by the practice of which they contrive to be as charming as only idle, barren American women can be. But coming and going in search of occasions to practice their favourite virtue of delight, they had made by their shuttlings across Italy a web of allurement all of sword glitter and taper gleams and lute notes, all the gloss of painting and the fair structure of palaces, the solemn show of history, some floating films of which even as far afield as Maverick began to enwrap me. But no sooner had I trusted myself upon it than I felt it to part suddenly with a ripping sound, to drop me in an unreported Italy where it was chiefly remarkable that neither the god over the altar nor the worshipper at the foot of it, looked to have had a comfortable meal. Far overhead in

their hand-made Heaven I could hear my friends discussing where was the best place to buy turquoises and the space composition of Perugino.

You are not to suppose that I wouldn't, if I could, have climbed up to them by those same processes unravelled in my fall, to have skimmed, if I had been able, the too public poverty on the edge of a superior protestantism, except for what came to me there from every quarter of the deforested hills and the overhandled valleys, the ineffable, pervasive evidences of Presence and Power. Something there was the whole land swam in, currents of vitality in which the maimed life of Italy moved and on which it fed, upon the eddy of which her noble, jewel coloured art was borne to definite shores of place and time. Lying still then at the bottom of my

pit of bewilderment I felt at times its buoying movement.

There was not, I am certain, in all the intimations of what I might find in Italy, the hope somehow in these old trails to come upon the slot of her evanished masteries, the fear in the presence of them of bafflement and unbalancing, any presage of what I have finally found. There was not in the day the faintest forecast shadow, nor in the manner of my going to it any warning. I went along the Arno, past its amber glinting water clearing green like chrysoprase, past swilled shadows of cold and poverty at the bases of warm tinted walls made luminous by reflection and so into a great pile of stone laid up square like a child's house of blocks, to see, as I believed, the world's best can-

vases; in fact straight into the man-centred mind of man.

It was not all at once I perceived it so. As I remember I stayed with the guide-book as far as the Sala di Giove, by which time the pictures began to melt into one another and to remove from me. Certain springs of pressure upon my spirit began to be released; it walked in a cool and stately place, remote, but not alienated. I must have gone on in this state above an hour, lured at times to the surface of my mood by some compelling canvas, like a torch set to catch salmon by night, only to sink drugged by beauty to a happy insensibility.

It was finally, though this is another matter, the hot unsmiling eyes of the Judith of Allori that made a point, perilous but competent, by which I climbed

back to the consciousness that what I walked in so familiarly unfamiliar, was the man-mind, told out as plainly as colour and line could do it in an age when no man pretended to care that any woman thought about anything but himself. For this is true that there is —until we in America provided the possibility of another one—but one point at which the minds of men and women interpenetrate, one tangency for their separate wheels of experience; since they neither hate alike, nor pray nor are faithful after the same manner, nor avenge themselves nor cherish their children in similar wise; but the supremest hour when they love together is all of one piece and consistency. And this I take it, this oneness only at the flame point of passion is chiefly why men discredit the judgments of women at most

other points, sweeping so far afield on the periphery of their interests, and why many women cherish the conviction that at heart all men are a little unclean. Well, here I was in the midst of the man thought, with no obscuring consciousness of sex, with no amendments and expurgations; occupied with repentance, with renunciation, with the beauty of women and the fatherliness of God. There were also the Virgins which were chiefly interesting for what the painters left out, but not in any case offered up to the judgment of women.

It was not then, nor even instantly, that it came to me that the key of something missed in the Christs, lay in the singleness of sex that went to the making of him. I had to go back to the Judith and climb from the point of Al-

lori's knowing that she had the passions that go with great force and that she liked—he was a great captain was Holfernes—and she liked making him love her before she killed him, to perceiving that by as much as all this was left out of the fair young mothers of Jesus, so completely the painters fell short of understanding that purity can live in the house of experience. And so to measure their drop from that to the frank male relish of form and colour in Titian's courtesan waiting for a change of underwear, and the plump Magdalenes before the repentance, any one of them just a woman who must have her man, not very particular about the means she took to get him, not intelligent enough to have employed any but the most obvious, until morning borne from some far shore of imagination rose the Venus

of Botticelli to show how love might be both pure and modest.

There was also a word added to that by the man-thing of white marble rising from the shadow of the Palazza Vecchio like a sea jet under some great natural cliff, as if it marked there the highest reach of what the Pagan put into his god and the Christian left out, the male, begetting principle of earth.

In a niche on the right as you enter the Church of St. Mark in Florence, there sits a plaster Christ, naked, bleeding, abominable, caged behind its grating in a little cairn of votive offerings, tarnished silver hollow shapes of hearts like the castings of outworn passions. Lean and dark he looks out of his tinsel drift—and the very first time of my going there I saw a man kneeling straight

up against the foot of the niche, his lips pressed to the grating, all his body a tremble with prayer. He was a common man to look at, rough handed, something coloured about his dress that suggested the Contadino, that much I saw at the first glance, moving on considerately,—and tears dropping unwiped on the unshaven jaw. As far up the nave as the Mosaic Madonna I could see the shake of his shoulders as he prayed.

I was gone on into the chapel where the Guido Reni's are, half an hour perhaps, and when I was come again, there was the man, kneeling straight up, his cheek laid to the grating; but he was not crying now. His lips moved at times, busy with a blessed name; he was pale and at peace. As his cheek was pressed to the cage so might it have been to the

breast of a woman who had forgiven him, and as I watched, the tawdry Christ turned upon me out of his pale eyes the Look, the inscrutable sad triumph of understanding. If this were not so, how should I have become suddenly aware of what I have proved since for your sake, that the niche behind the plaster figure was filled with men's offerings, epaulets, sword scabbards, belts—Oh, a man's Christ! As suddenly as when walking in the wood when the gaze wanders and the mind is dreaming all abroad, arrives the thrill and stir that warns us the gods are about to pass, so suddenly the man-mind moved and apprised me of these things.

When Francis of Assisi—Saint Bernardino, Saint Dominic, all that company, but Saint Francis serves our pur-

pose best—when he had brought his fleshy desires to ebb, he saw that when Jesus of Nazareth said "forsake . . . . sell all . . . and follow me," he meant just that. It was no point of circumcision or of having water poured upon him, nor yet of healings such as men of no great moral worth are still able to do among us, that marked out Christ, but the forsaking and the despising, which he of Assisi strove very literally to do.

There is not so much difficulty about marrying Holy Poverty, provided you take no other wife; but Saint Francis lived longer than Christ and discovered that it was as difficult then for a man with the gifts of competency and power to remain poor as it is now to become rich without them. Like Christ, Francis owned nothing, but he had to found monasteries to keep from doing so,

parasitic communities for the imitation of Christ, which they could only manage so long as there remained a large contingent of the partly regenerate to support them. And whatever of carnality he could not crowd out of himself by good works he took out by abuse; and received the Stigmata as a sign of the validity of his portraiture of Christ in himself. And such as he became by this process did Perugino and Luini and Palma Vecchio paint their Lord.

I do not now remember when in the course of this adventure it occurred to me that whether they had, as the Greeks do, deified what they most wished to be, or as the Saints, all that they could not, there might still be something in the way men painted themselves to exemplify a Redeemer made more or less in their

likeness; but I recall very well what, when I had first gone into the portrait room of the Ufizzi, making for its validity by surprise, out of the live canvas leaped upon me.

It was not in the Rembrandt nor in the four great Englishmen, too secure in their Englishness, nor in that good swaggerer next the Velasquez the way he hoped he looked to you, which is not the way he knew he looked as is proved by the next one, but practically in all the rest of them, the wistful hope to be regarded not for what they were or had attained, but for the attendant Vision.

Love me, they said, because the world is so beautiful and all, because I see the rivers joyous and the mountains tender, all motherhood between your breasts, all Heaven beckoning in your eyes, for all this exquisite rapture of understand-

ing of which I am the vase, the cup . . . in short, the pained vague wonder of women waiting to be loved for their capacity for self forgetting, women with the souls of sylphs who, with a twenty-six inch waist, could not get you to believe it.

It was there in terms that I could read—even now I shake at the swift upward rush of it—the plain groundwork of temperament for what their Christ displayed. For what was he but an artist painting the image of sacrifice upon the world, the profoundly extenuating possession put forth in place of thrones and kingdom? But they did not know any way, these Titians, Tintorettos, of showing him seized of this inward preciousness except by the witness of not owning the rest, no way to certify his citizenship of Heaven but to

tag it with the price. He was to come in an age profoundly convinced of its lost condition, as the Reward and the Comforter, and it is not in man to imagine comfort purely, free of all intimation of the breast from which he sucked it. Consider from what subliminal memories must have come that portrait of the bosom upon which man's spirit leaned, most that he had known of upholding, enfolding arms, all womanly.

But it didn't somehow, make it any easier for me so to apprehend him, saint-made, artist-made, but most of all man-made, to take him as I saw him, wrapt, mystic, triumphant on the side to God-ward, but mazed and fumbling at the exigencies of our common life. Even so. And this is why I am not a Christian, for I have counted nothing so much

as to live competently among men, pulse with them, love with them, hate, beget, achieve.

What work should I make of taking no thought for the morrow, lacking the power to draw money from fishes' mouths? And rendering unto Cæsar what they are still trying to find out by the help of Maxims and Lyddites whether it is Cæsar's or no? What do I do about casting no stones, with a marriage code which, in the hands of orthodoxy, is the modern enginery for stone throwing, framed some thousands of years before, coincident with concubinage and slavery? And it is sometimes easier to forsake thy father and thy mother than to live with them, particularly if they are a bit old fashioned and you have the temperament of a reformer. And if you have a word to

bear to the sons of men you are justified.

But how if you have a word to bear and are constrained to live competently the common life? Let me tell you it has never been done. Never, O Galilean! Not by you nor St. Francis nor by Shelley nor Bunyan, not the Captain of the Salvation Army. In them all must need be some form of forsaking and separation. What then have you to say to me who desire nothing so much as to be what you never were, happy and respectable?

All this I demanded of Giotto's Christ and Cimabue's but they did not know the answer to that any more than Giotto and Cimabue knew it, when, sensible of this large defeat of the common issue, they drew him so bowed upon the tree.

Only the Buonarotti dared draw Christ at all points like a man, and him the church disallowed. For if the certainty of not having conquered life by living, did not draw that bloody sweat, said I to the makers of Christ, you have made too much of his having conquered it by dying. Betrayed was he, and condemned unjustly? But commonly those so used have found it the root of endurance. A nail for his two feet and one in either hand? But did you ever bear a child, or lie shot-torn on a battle field long hours of sleety rain? What, man! said I to him, hold up your head, if in three days you hope for the resurrection, else will I believe what I have heard, that all that was mortal of you came from a woman! Why so much distress at dying unless there dies with you the hope to live life out—out to the stretch

of all its joyous possibilities, to the reach of its intelligence, to the satisfaction of its appetites, to the fulness of its affections? Do they indeed draw him best who draw him *suffering* the life of man? He suffered it—you too, Dante!—And so, said the bleeding Christ to whom I had prayed a long time between the dropping frescoes and nothing had come of it—I am the better able to afford you companionship in sorrow and the pattern of resignation.

But, said I, I am not altogether for enduring sorrow, but for doing away with it, and seek not so much sympathy for my tears as an occasion to laugh. Suppose now it had been an American kneeling straight up before the plaster Christ, an American business man, keen, dominant, a little portly,—but no, you cannot imagine that, for what an

American asks of God is success, not consolation for the want of it.

It is strange though that the direct response of the spirit to the conventional crucifix is not of pitiableness but of elevation, the pull upward of those stretched arms, the more when they are not laid straight to the beams but slanting a little as the body sags, the face lifted, carrying the suggestion to exultation. It makes one to wonder afresh at the super-consciousness of Rome that set such an ensign to the fore front of her missionary efforts. Susceptible as the earlier peoples were to the spiritual incitement of lines,—how much more than we this glory of Italian architecture is to show,—it is easy to understand that when the cross was tossed up in the preaching of some wild

monk on the crest of his enthusiasm, there should have ensued naturally the up-taking breath, the shout and the lifted arms of acclaim; easy to find in the start of my own spirit the warrant for the miracles of conversion on its mere exposure, for it sticks still in my mind how like is this posture of utter humiliation and defeat to the raised head and outspread arms of victory.

II

As we sit at the centre of the wheel of consciousness, surveying its field by starts and glimpses, we are aware of much that comes to us, sights, sounds, knowledges, being whirled out by the motion of its delicate balancing to some circumference from which in the ordinary course we seldom recover it. It might even in some sharp jar of the organism be thrown clear beyond its periphery into unknowableness, or in any sensible check of loss of change, come dropping back to us stamped with the remoteness of other worlds; if indeed these winged surprises are not sometimes shot from their trajectory as meteors by like upsettings in systems far outside

our own. So now by the check of an unimagined Italy, whole starry flights, igniting as they rushed inward, lit up the place in which I moved.

I was to see there by this flare, and afterward experience, the process by which the Suffering Man-God had been built up out of the spiritual resistance to the life-lust of the time, which drew him bulwarked against this by monstrosities of restraint, over-ripe fruit of a time manured by the blood of martyrs. I was to see him so outlined by the indomitable little Roman Jew who had never seen Jesus in the flesh, but was willing to withstand to their faces those who had for the validity of his Vision; from whose great reach the figure of the Cross threw backward shadows on the Gospels pushed out against invasive Judaism, Gnosticism, Greek joy of life.

Roman pride of it, reflecting the hesitancies and half conjectures of the times. It began to appear a comforting circumstance that infallibility of the narratives of Christ was never claimed by the writers of them, but was a gift some three centuries later from the Church, like those excellencies bestowed by the lover on the Beloved, not discernible to the outward sense. Facts such as these, then, neither new or strange, but lying all about us in the matrix of history, too public for recounting, began to drop back into my plane of consciousness: all this still revolving nebulae of unconsidered things, sorted by the processes of the years, now bursting into flame, illuminated far inward to the deeps of self, far outward to the reach of being.

I was so to see the makers of Christ,

working away on the inner wall of the enclosing Church, at the perfect figure of a Man, thinning the structure as they worked, until when they had pushed to its desolating furthest all the things he couldn't be, the chisel of the Buonarotti had cut through with the splendid pagan figure of the Redentore to the broad light of day. It was here in Italy I was to see the way of escape and choose—I was not long in that—to go walking out in the light, or stay worshipping at a hole in the wall. And from here then I am to take you by such ways as I was led, not sure of anything except that all roads through Italy are worth travelling. And the first of these was the vision of Saint Mary of the Fields.

Sometime or other in my walks I

must have taken notice of the little church of Santa Maria in Campo, and certainly I had walked in the fields below Fiesole where there are irises; but neither of these would account for the vision. It is a question if any good comes of visions to people who do not have them, but to those who do, they arrive with an authority not to be done away by proving that the subject of them is suffering from a temporary lesion of the occipital cortex. Least of all have they anything to do with that process of active association by which the stir of boughs in the wind, the play of light or a floating garment, tricks the too eager sense to fill out the suggestion of presences; common intelligible experiences. Such an associative movement can call up the apparition once entertained, but not occasion it. Christ

walking in the desert dust I saw with my eyes; Saint Mary of the Fields I saw.

Nobody else could have seen it. It was a spring twilight and the grass was tall. It was a soggy place at the edge of a field with wild irises blowing above the grass. There was a fence of twisted withes and the edge of a kitchen garden; somewhere there was a plum tree blossoming; the white petals drifted forward among the grasses. And there was the Vision; she walked among the lilies and I knew her by the child she carried and by the eyes, the expressionless, round blue eyes of the wayside Madonnas. There was no straining for foreknowledge or mysticism, she was just a young woman with a child. Her under dress was white, and over that and her head a long blue mantle fell; it mixed with the

irises, it was blue like them, it was part of them.

She moved toward us smiling—did I say there were country people in the vision?—they laid by their work and worshipped her, not the Mother of God, but just Saint Mary of the Fields, the woman and the child. She was Ceres, she was Demeter, she was the fulness of the earth, she was Fecundity. So she appeared to me in a place apart, as if some inner optic had opened on a thing that is, and closed without volition, not having disturbed the normal organs and their processes. It was a vision.

After that it came often; a breath of warm wind, the smell of the spring flowers the boys cried in the street—I scarcely knew what brought or bid it go. There would be the reeking pavement and lilies springing in it unaccountably,

and the moving Mother; then the wheels of a push cart would go through the folds of her gown, and for kneeling worshippers would be loathly beggars displaying their miseries like small wares. Sometimes the traffic of the street broke through it until it lay like shattered light of stained glass windows without motion or design, and once I saw it clear across the piazza of the Neptune, like the rainbow that travels with the spray of oncoming waves, through the droves of thickset Tuscan farmers, come to bargain on a Thursday morning. It was a vision; it came and went. And I remembered how many times I had run on the trails in the moonless evenings of April to find the word it said—what was confirmed to me here as the meaning of much of the pulse and stir of vitality in a country so stripped, so parcelled out,

so wanton to all conquerors, so draggled at the tail of events: the bubbling motion of life rising to its opportunity in birth. Said a woman to me who had lived deep into the hearts of the Contadini, the proudest hour of any young pair is when the hope of children is writ large on them and they walk abroad arm in arm to declare it to their friends. Poor and often in want, she said, they were still able to feel themselves the vessels of Life, of which the normal process is Joy.

It was so in the vision, when the child leaped in her arms they worshipped it; old, bent and diseased, they knelt on the damp earth and knew their redemption. Not in the man dying, but in the one being born is Deliverance, said Saint Mary of the Fields to me; and the poor heard it.

Of all the world gifts to the Christ myth, none speaks plainlier of Italy than this same story of the Virgin Birth which I had found myself unable to believe now that I had seen it as it looked to men. The Jews could not have invented it even with the aid of that high imagination which attempted the naming of the whole Heavenly Host. They had tried their hand at expressing the union of the Divine and human and got no nearer to it than the Spirit of God descending in the form of a dove. St. Paul had not heard the story of the Virgin when he came preaching up to Rome. But they knew there how a god should be born. Vestals seeking the spoor of the Chaste Huntress by woodland springs, had come back filled with fire, their bodies made to bud and bear fruit—a straying soldier or a care free

shepherd?—nay, but a god! How otherwise should a touch, which else had been a profanation, have brought the springing flames, the white blinding of surrender? There was never a child yet reputed born of a god but the woman made the first report of it, and many men have been accounted gods on no stouter evidence than this miracle.

If I hadn't up to this time found any satisfaction in the Virgins whom the artists painted as Mystery, if I couldn't abide those they had painted from their mistresses, I began at least to understand how the most beloved of them should be the Madonna della Sedia, the wife of a peasant whose bambino came to her quite in the common way.

As for the choiring Angels of the Nativity—too plump and palpable; perhaps Giotto saw them truliest as

little flitting figures with a tail of flame —no doubt the heavens are filled with music for joy of the first-born—I remember how they sang—

So the vision, having delivered itself, passed and dissolved down the Val d'Arno, so that I hardly knew if the trail it took was red and blue with wind-shaken anemones or the many coloured soul of Italy itself. Any tale that came up in that land out of the common human experience would owe to it a thousand graces and tendrils by which it twined the closer to our own.

There went a word also to that, said by the figure of Love in Titian's Love and the Young Lady. It hangs in the west room of the Villa Borghesi, though you will not find it in the catalogue under that name, where it has been called

Sacred and Profane Fiddlesticks so long that many people think that is what Titian really meant by it. But there sits the young lady, properly busked and skirted as befits her condition, by the rim of a water basin, and in her eyes the whisper of love blows up a summer cloud of dreams. Across the fountain Love herself holds up the lamp of life and a little love dabbles his hands happily in the water, ready to depart on whatever blushful errand is the result of that colloquy; of which I shall set down here no more than suits with the occasion. For it is difficult without having seen, to realise how exclusively the Italian Masters were occupied with religious subjects, so that whatever else of the man-thought came to the surface in that age gets a new significance from its rarity. Titian's picture is a

"witness to reputation" that in spite of Lucretia Borgia and Saint Catherine of Sienna, all the time Christianity was perpetrating its magnificent experiment in the imitation of Christ, there was some saving humanness at the bottom of the crucible.

When you think, indeed, of the scale upon which the Church projected itself into the dramatic abnegations of that time, it doesn't seem believable except in a country where lay deeply the subconsciousness of the reactive power of Life to pull them back again. In fact the colder peoples never did so trust themselves upon a scheme of salvation of which the happiest conclusion is that they have disproved it. If one wanted the q. e. d. of the futility of the so called spiritual cure of living, if he hadn't, I mean, lived it all out in his own un-

cared for body and unrealised genius, let him come to Italy. But not on that account be any the less indebted to St. Peter Martyr, St. Theresa, St. Simon Styletus, all the obscure and uncalendered, who must have been saved by the singleness with which they gave themselves to prove that for the generality, this was not the way of salvation. They cut very deeply into our enclosing stone with the image of the Bleeding Christ, and if they drew him too thin, too narrow in the chest, too weak in his members, it was still so much cleared space for those who later would swell the proportions to something larger than a man.

I shouldn't have been able in this underfed, most Christian country, to sustain myself without the recollection which here took on the proportions of a

revelation, that Christ nowhere said it is good to be half starved and overworked and ill and untended, nor that anguish and loss and incompleteness and lame legs and leprosy are blessings in disguise; that he never turned away anybody that applied to him for relief on the ground that it was good for their spiritual development to suffer these things.

What he did come promising was the kingdom of Heaven *at hand,* and whatever else the Kingdom meant to the Hebraic imagination, it didn't mean a modern manufacturing town, nor Whitechapel nor the Tenderloin, for it is expressly stated that there should be none hurt there nor none destroy, none hungry nor afraid, nor pain nor crying any more. And the first quali-

fication for citizenship should be a concern to have everybody get as much as you wanted for yourself. He didn't say you could get out of it on the ground that your neighbour needed misery as a spiritual corrective; he hadn't, in fact, put it at any time that misery was the evidence of anything but the iniquity of those in authority; and it wouldn't be accepted that you couldn't see your way to that and the existing social order and the economic status. So far as he put himself on record as to the economic status it wasn't complimentary, and so far as he cared, you could have knocked the social order to smithereens, provided you evened up.

Christ never said of a man that his riches signified the degree of his competency; if riches were a sign of anything it was most likely he would

go to hell. For the Carpenter believed, having practised poverty in his person, that chief of the conditions that bred it is freedom for the unlimited accumulation of goods. To be rich assumed your consent to your neighbour being poor and to all the social waste it entailed; it wasn't going to help you to explain that you wanted wealth not for its own sake but because you could do so much good with it; merely to be caught with it in your possession was the witness of your complicity. And he called the leading business men of his time a generation of vipers.

I have looked a long time in such unclear accounts of him as are left to us, to see if he expressed any preference for soup kitchens, rummage sales and doing without butter to save pennies for the missionary box, as a means of es-

tablishing the Kingdom with justice and with judgment forever, for you might think in view of the widespread employment of these means that they had been specially recommended. But there isn't a word to say that it is a degree more Christian to take up a collection than to pass eight-hour and living-wage and prohibitive-child-labour laws. So far as there is anything in his teaching to the contrary, you could establish the Kingdom of Heaven by an act of Congress if you thought it could be done that way, for its salient characteristic is the reorganisation of society on the basis of your neighbour being you. And when they asked him, he gave them a very practical elucidation of the futility of pretending the reorganisation already effected so long as you had two coats and your neighbour had

none. But when you look about among his name people you see that they haven't been able to manage it. My cousin Churchly still prays aloud on Sunday for Kingdom Come, but he is one of the prominent men of his community, and if The Kingdom dropped on him suddenly it's a chance if he would like it.

By this I was aware that I had come out on a kind of public cross roads, very much frequented by a great many people who seemed to have mistaken it for the end of the journey, through which, thin as a rabbit trail on the mesas, ran the track of Undimmed Wonder.

Where it emerged again precisely, was in the catacombs, amid such slight traces of the time nearest the event as

were remarkable for the lack of any particular significance attached to the crucifixion. Tragic and disconcerting as that incident had been, there appeared no effort in those first centuries to account for it in any other way than by the malice and stupidity of Authority. Where they couldn't draw him plain man without nimbus or glory, they prefigured him as Youth, pure Greek in its expression of vitality, the Gardener, the Good Shepherd; more than all they drew him as Orpheus, charming the beasts with his Lyre as Christ had charmed the hearts of men. What the Orphic symbol signified was that for three centuries at least they dreamed of a friendly, joyous Christ, sound spirit in sound body; and though Peter and Paul, men who had seen and known, preached in these same catacombs, they

left no evidence there that they were aware of any pertinence of Christ's death to the more stupendous fact of his life. Gods had died before now in Italy, and it was not until along in the sixth century, long after death became the common purchase of any attempt to live that life, the Bleeding ensign blocked large across the way. Thereafter one was to see all Christendom like sheep strayed in the mountains that once they have found a precipice, huddle under it, given over to wolves and hunger, milling about in the shadow of a high misrated sacrifice.

III

But if the Bleeding Christ wasn't to be found in the Gospels nor in the Catacombs nor among the Apostolic Fathers, he was here plainly enough in the hot heart of the Cinquecento; a god of the Inner self, of the deep unquiet questionings, the soul starts, the flights and drops of temperament, the visible casting of a people in travail with the Brotherhood of man.

Often in the presence of the noblest examples of it, one is obsessed of the notion that a work of art may come to have an independent existence beyond its limitation of paint and print and marble, and a meaning quite other than the artist meant by it; as if in the process of creation it had reached a point so

crammed with vitality as to grow capable suddenly of going by itself and speaking with its own tongue. Here everywhere one felt the word of the great masters harped into silence by the overtones of their work; never so significantly as in those vast monuments to the Glory of God, to which they bear indifferent witness.

I do not refer now to what they say to you by line and colour, arch and ascending shaft; any unaxed forest, domed hill, stained summer twilight, will do as much for you. I can get you that same lift, that pulse beat in the palms, in the sequoia groves of California as well as in Milan, and it will mean as much, the same and no more. But sitting quietly in one of these century built cathedrals, under the choir thick with carved interlacings as the

stems of the chaparral, you will hear it thinking to itself incredible things. And if you could happily be blank to all those influences elevating the sense to the anticipation of the Oversoul that convinces us that there is such a thing as religious architecture, you will observe that what the cathedral does not speak to you is of God. Not at any rate of the Suffering Man-God. Whoever the deity that haunts these drafty glooms shot through with broken colour, you judge him to have delighted in silver gilt, stale incense, undercut porphyry; and to have had a pleasant fancy for red hats eaten through with dust. Emptied of its active practice, this whole externalisation of religious impulses evidences no more of deity than the case of a caddis fly or a chipmunk's nest, a hollow place for the soul of man

to stretch and grow in. For man when he takes stick and stone to be a tongue to him, can not make it speak of anything but man. What the cathedrals said of him was very little more to the purpose than those curious silver models, hung up by the beneficiary at potent altars, of the delights God had secured to him, or the disorders of which he had been cured. But of the High and Holy Inhabitator of Eternity it says little except that conceivably He likes man and man likes to make a sacrifice of what he likes most, and to adorn and bejewel it; and by the ornament of beauty and preciousness incite himself to the state wherein sacrifice is pleasurable.

Here you have a wheel around which if the mind flies fast enough it is whirled off in a tangent of pure mystery. But

at Paestum between the browning fields and the sea-sparkle, there intervened the consciousness of a selective faculty at work ordering this dedicate beauty. It was not beauty, just, but particular kinds of it, definite, prejudged effects by which both Greek and Christian guessed the traffic between his soul and God best affected. There was a pile of stone, or a fair glade in a wood by which you reached up to touch Blessedness:—and then you kissed the stone and called it holy, and came back to the glade like deer to old licks which have long lost their saltiness. What reared the pillars of Paestum and Milan was not so much the conviction that God was pleased by these things, as the appetite man had for that peculiar elevation of the spirit which had overtaken him as long ago as one deep,

continuous wood covered all Aryan Europe. Longer, perhaps. Tall shafted roundness, losing itself in intricate dim lacings overhead—however the effect and whatever, he judged it mighty good for him, and in his temples afforded himself the opportunity of repeating it at will. The difference between the Aryan and Cinquecento was mainly that one of them ascribed this agreeable awesomeness to the Spirit of the Tree, and the other knew that it was owed to a Presence named, bounded, of prescribed habits and prejudices; but when the processes of it were collated they began to exhibit likenesses that put forth to me as much as ever the dry tree blossomed with the Grace o' God for Brother Lawrence.

I must ask you now to go back with

me as far as the militant protestantism in which I was bred—that sense of moral superiority which if you are a young person is not quite free from a notion that Jews and Catholics ought always to be a little ashamed of themselves,—to understand how far it was from anything that came to serve afterward for a rule of living when the induced Churchianity had withered away by what means and times I could scarcely tell. I think it was about the time I discovered the ground was good to sleep on, or it might have been later when I had learned to trust the pricking between my shoulders to advise me if any one had crossed over the two forks of the creek into my territory of Seven Pines—but about that time I discovered that I hadn't any of it left and didn't feel to want it.

I said induced Churchianity because I am convinced it came from nothing deeper than propinquity and that curious propulsion, the Wish to Do Good, which so permeates our human plane that it overtakes even a Scotch collie on the way to become a man. Of this I had, at the time I went apart into the wilderness, as much as a dog, a very intelligent one, hanging on the word of a master adored but dimly comprehended. I wished to serve and so I was sure the gods had been about it, I should have been delighted to be imposed upon. And I got to be reasonably sure in time that it was the gods. I all but heard them, touched them, saw them: in the blue gulfs of dawn, in the storms enfilading behind the thunderous ranges, in friendlinesses that came in through the windows when the light was out and

the tall flowers swayed together in the garden. I believe it was Kern River Jim taught me the name to call it. He said it was the Friend-of-the-Soul-of-Man; and Tinnemaha, the Medicine Man, taught me the way to work on its disposition.

The best way is by singing and dancing. Not that the Friend cares for these things, but they make a stair by which you may climb up and be at one with him, and from that high vantage work cures, see hidden things and bring desire to pass. I believed in the cures because I had seen them.

He said, the Medicine Man, that if in the still of the twilight you went out and aside from your hut and saw the white flanks of the Mountain between the two darks of earth and sky and thought of wings, singing your thought and sway-

ing your body to the rhythm of the song, you might rise upon it and overlook the thin brown trails that ran every way on the mesas, and sing about them; and if one ran towards your home it might remind you of the song by which your mother rocked your basket, then you would sing yourself by that to higher flights of knowledge and tenderness, and so singing and dancing all that moved in you, your soul ascends to the Friend-of-the-Soul-of-Man. If I knew any plainer words to describe this process I would use them, for it is important you should understand this as part of a vital experience. I remember well that one of the movements by which this passage is affected requires the knees a little bent, arms stretched up and out, the head lifted . . . !

It was by this means I was able to dispense with much that the Already Branded held indispensable. Once the Friend was touched, it stood me in place of great love, pictures, music, the traditional atmosphere.

I climbed as high by it as any tourist by the spires of Milan. But once away from the Wilderness I suffered a check in the inability of the average to read this commerce with the Friend beyond its appearance of eccentricity. If it took all Europe to purchase *them* the flush and the singing pulse of inspiration, it wasn't to be believed that it could be come by as easily as by dancing and the waving of arms. But now that I had come the way of all the world to find it, in the inexplicable excitement in the presence of great masterpieces and the longing for complete possession

in them which is akin to the panting of the soul for God, what confronted one there, was the certainty that no matter from what point of a well displayed ankle or a beggar's sores, Titian or Saint Francis set off, nor how much farther they had gone in it, they had come by the same trail that took the Medicine Man on the way to The Friend. If I couldn't for the moment perceive the stair by which Raphael climbed,—the wings of his genius fan so fast under the splendour of his performance—I was there with him as completely by the little back passage of knowing how the young green of the live oaks comes on, and the smell of wild honey in the woods at Carmel. I was there more in the ruder things, precipitated by the artist's limitations,—for I never felt under the

least obligation not to be pleased with a picture because it was a poor one,—cracked vessels by the leakage of which you guessed at what the greatest carried so safely. If I had lost the touch of the Friend, lacking in an utterly misapprehensive society the occasion to practice the only approach I knew, if I had gone dry by the offices of my friends, how suddenly I was full again.

Sitting in the sun by Giotti's tower, the eye beginning to climb its airy intricacies of inlaid and chiselled stone, the slow caressing sense swept outward into whorls and whorls of light. In fact I never did get quite to the top of it, overtaken by the dizzying inundation. It would spring quite as aptly from some uncatalogued fresco from which the plaster dropped, or broken capital deeply undercut, and O, a thousand

times in Rome! What was on the whole surprising, seeing I didn't much believe in them, it came equally from the early Christian relics, saturate still with the high mood of martyrdom, and from the Greek marbles in the Vatican; and at Hadrian's Villa and at the Garden of the Villa d'Este it went quite over my head. Delight falling slack there of its own weight gives you no choice but to believe there are Supernal Sources that, when by beauty we are removed a little from ourselves, we know and touch. I had as much comfort there from the flat, malachite coloured pools and the pointed cypresses as a good Catholic from the bones of a Saint.

Something of this sort, half realised, must have been at the root of the insistence of my friends that what one

comes to Italy for is inspiration; something to stretch out one's poet, painter, sculptor stuff to cover the reach of ambition. There is a notion extant that Surpassingness is a sort of fructifying pollen that floats from the perfect flower of Art; that the French got it from the Italians and the Italians got it from the Greeks, who got it from God knows where, but at any rate it wasn't from Podunk nor Maverick nor Chicago. It is a sort of miraculous manna that fell on Athens and Florence and a few other places, and is still to be scooped up there by the knowing, who, if we could learn the way Raphael coloured and Michael Angelo modelled could make the sum of our work spell as much as theirs. We are expected to get Inspiration in Italy just as we get little bottles of Chartreuse and Vene-

tian beads to smuggle home and work up with native stuffs.

Well, I am not saying if Italy pierced the crust of you, what blessed substance may not come through, but all the shrines you seek declare it sprung from that high contact which has no time nor place, and is not to be lessened of its origin by the name you give it, nor if like the medicine man, your means of discharging it are absurdly insufficient. There was a Maid who heard Voices . . . which did not serve her country less than if her early education had led her to derive them from Pallas Athene.

It is to seek not air, but the means to breathe, not God but how he may flow to you; through the large personal forces of nature, through Christ and the Saints, or at home . . . but I will tell you how that is . . .

For I have heard a voice awake in the dawn
dim valleys,
A shout from the rearing hills hand-fasted un-
der the headlands,
Where the wild sheep are
And the trails are hid by the heather;
Whose hands are under the earth for the travail
of the harvests.
For I have lain on the hills and the strong wind
hath covered me,
I have seen the Much Desired, white as wheat
in September.

You that hark for the sea in a shell, hollow and
pearled and precious,
He is here by the surf that rings
The brown foreshore with thunder!
He has left the dropping shrines for the altar
lift of the mesas,
Far are His feet in the dew from the man in-
fested places.

Not in the old, old house whose props were flawed in the casting,
Not with the old, old sword, crumpled and dulled at the edges;
Strained little souls that creep to bedizened, ancient altars,
I heard Him pass in the wind.
The sea blue lilacs bent under;
Who knows but for you He will stop and cover your lack with His garments.

Who cares whither the King has gone whom He has blessed in parting?
I have seen wings astir that left the heavens tender,
And I am hushed with happiness
And I am dumb with wonder.
You shall know me where I go by the smell of the meadows,
The scent of the broken scrub and the yerba buena,
I have been breaking trail for the Much Desired!

Last evening as I sat at tea with some fellow tourists discussing the inadequacy of most other tourists to the bright opportunity of Italy, I saw the Viatacum go out from the little church of San Jacopo and come back in the twilight, nothing visible of it but the white wings of the napkin and the flitting spark of the censer; and though I tried I could not think of the Office protestantly, for as it passed to its gold nest under the porch of San Jacopo the tapers twinkled friendlily. Nothing, they said, so futile as repentance for anything so trivial as our notion of badness is a world where the condemnation of one generation becomes the passport of merit in the next, has to do with that common human movement toward making a good end, by which the savage in his death chant and the monk kissing his crucifix in his

cell, holds each his soul aloft as he goes out. You would think, said the tapers that went before the Host,—and I heard them in that place where I had seen Saint Mary of the Fields, all the time I was having my second cup of tea —you would think it true what all the great teachers of Immortality have said, that it is not in the nature of Eternal Life to flow simply from living, but rests on the operation of certain normal forces no more certain than the contingency of life on birth. What then if that outward reach of the Spirit in dissolution should be as natural and imperative as the instinct of self preservation? What I happened to know about it from certain friends of mine who had gone singing to the fight at Bitter Waters, was that it was no whit different from the up-leap

of the artist soul in conception that saves him from the pit of his own insufficiency. Let me tell you, the tapers signalled, how many have passed to that high state by the name of Christ Jesus.

It was here at last that I had found out what I had come to Italy for, though it wasn't, as my friends were willing to impute, to find wherewithal to plump out my work to creditable proportions. For though I knew of the great geniuses I had come so far to touch, that one had loved a loose woman and one had been a saint and another had been nourished in Greek philosophies, I might do all of these and be still, for anything more vital than their technique, far to seek. It took all Italy to explain to me that what lay behind their work was the same thing that lighted

my mother's face as she would sit of a Sunday morning about church time, waiting for me to tie her bonnet strings, singing hymns; and *she* called it the Joy of the Lord.

And if I looked to steep myself in the transcendent quality of any particular achievement, I was equally at a loss.

You couldn't be sure from the pictures, which of the artist's models were his mistresses, and though the revelations of love and jealousy are as reliable as those of religion, they remain so far as they affect a man's work, private, non-transmissible. Of all the great masters whose way through Italy was lit by the flowering splendour of her art, the only one who had left any appreciable trail to his sources was Jesus Christ.

For this you have the plain historic evidence that the well spring of his inspiration was the Desire of Man.

The great passions of beauty, of empire and salvation, the passion of chivalry and the love of ladies die down the coast of history and leave us drained and blank; but you can still be taken with the passion for humanity. You can paint from it, write from it, prophesy even in—let us say, Emporia, Kansas. Only Del Sarto had a mistress like Lucretia, but there is no one so poor that he has not a neighbour. "Greater than these ye shall do . . ." I shouldn't wonder. We have all Italy to show us how not to go about it, for the chief difference between the fifteenth century and the twentieth is that then you loved your neighbour by being sorry for him, and now you love him by being

glad . . . and sensible and scientific and efficient.

Among the few and poor reminders I have been able to bring out of Italy is one of a value far beyond its worth. It is the figure of an underfed man nailed to a cross, done all in yellow wood, so small that a palm's breadth will cover it, most miserable, naked, wounded; the arms stretched up and out, the head lifted. I do not keep it with the brass candlesticks from Rome and the della Robia, but laid among my papers where I can take it out occasionally and look at it, and as often as I do it sticks in my mind how like the posture is to that of victory.

LOVE AND THE YOUNG LADY

When I heard them at it thick summer sat in the trees of the Villa Borghesi and no sound but the fountain's soft, incessant rain came through to the west room of the galleria. All the pictures hung in a heavy drowse; they nodded; suddenly as if the hot Roman afternoon had weighted them past the breaking point of tension, they snapped wide awake. The Lady of the Lamp looked out of Titian's landscape. She was of so noble a loveliness that as she moved there went a ripple through all the stored up splendour of the room. Colours and shapes of beauty quickened on a hundred canvases, the marbles glowed. She looked this way and that as one anticipating the eavesdropper before opening an impressive matter. I

sat so still that the guard strolling past the door just then, thought I was asleep and moved off considerately; he would have appreciated a siesta himself. So it was that I overheard as she leaned across the fountain to the Young Lady and went on with a conversation that must have been left off as long ago as when men first forgot her name and beban to call her Profane.

"The worst of you," she said, "is that you think you have given all to Love when the most you have done is to think about him."

"Oh, and dream," said the Young Lady, "and teach my breath to come and go with the rhythm of his name!"

"And find no doubt that he greatly ennobles the world merely by being in it."

"So much so," said the Young Lady,

"that while he is in the world, I would not wish to go out of it."

"And that," said the Lady of the Lamp, "you call loving; but it is merely being in love."

"Ah," she was prettily downcast at this, "I thought they were the same thing!"

"Being in love," the goddess explained, "is a state into which even the foolish may fall, the more foolish the further. But loving is an act; it gives and it draws."

"I have given all I have," protested the Young Lady, "my thoughts . . . and myself," she blushed adorably, "though that comes later."

"The first," said the goddess, "is a gift seldom appreciated, and the second men frequently tire of. Let me tell you," she went on, for she saw that for

very consternation the Young Lady was not agreeing with her, "the indispensable gift you make to a man is his love for you."

The Young Lady was offended. So much pains had been spent on her bringing up that it was inconceivable that the quality of preciousness shouldn't inhere even in her dreams.

"Though of course," she conceded, "I should want to be his ideal."

"Which means," prompted the Lady of the Lamp, "being the complement of his most intimate predilections."

"Oh, now you are cynical!"

Queen Love put down her lamp on the rim of the water basin and the little love went on dabbling at its bright reflection. She was prepared to be spacious in explanation.

"Man-love," she said, "is man's an-

swer to a particular stimulus: pride if he is prideful, love of conquest, the need of spending. Great Passion is always bestowed on him by the Beloved."

"But how bestowed, if not by loving."

"Least of all by that. By being the incitement to his appetite, whether for capriciousness, or submission, or distinction. By the art of being desired." Here she smiled and corrected herself. "It is sometimes done by seeming."

"But seeming," protested the girl, "is deceit." She had all the proper woman's horror of a practised beguilement.

"No doubt," assented the goddess cheerfully, "it is much better to find out what is the ideal of the man who is yours, and spend the rest of the time

being that. I hope I needn't say what a service it is to have enabled one to love you."

"Oh," breathed the Young Lady, "it is to be made all air and fire. It is to hear the shouting of the stars and to feel the swing of the earth under you."

"Well, then?" triumphed the goddess.

"But if one is married one has to keep house, and there is always one's social position—"

"That!" she scorned, "that is a thing you have made yourself, and if you can't manage with it you must mend it." She took up her lamp and trimmed the flame. "I know what you are thinking," she went on, "because you have always been required to associate these things with the idea of loving, you have supposed they really have something to

do with it. They only have to do with the state of society."

"I can't think of love without marriage," the Young Lady was very positive on that point. "It means that if it means anything."

"Well—it means mating; and calling the world to witness. The wish to make it known is one of the ways of knowing it for love when you find it; something so high and fine that you are willing to invite the compulsion of the gods against any falling away from its ennoblement. What women can't understand is that it is Love the lover would be faithful to, rather than the woman. Once the perfect flower of love is dropped, the person of the Beloved is no more than the empty vase, which may still have a certain preciousness, having been the vessel of delight."

"Oh, I shouldn't like that in the least," cried the Young Lady, "being a kind of keepsake, merely."

"There is a sort of nobleness in that, too," the goddess allowed, "being faithful to the instrument by which the exquisite instance came."

I was afraid the conversation would stop here, the Young Lady was so plainly beyond her depth; but the Lady of the Lamp looked at her and smiled while she sighed.

"Titian painted you," she said, "and you have the failings of your time. It comes of thinking too much about your souls. No man ever yet loved a woman because she deserved it. You are worth exactly as much love as you can create."

"No more than that!" she was a very charming young lady and didn't in the least believe it.

"If you are thinking of your value as the Lady of the House—that is another affair. I meant your worth as a lover. One of the reasons why women like marriage to be inviolable is that it gives them leave to absorb themselves in loving without being at the pains to go on producing the elements of fire. Love given isn't invariably of advantage to the object of it; it is the love a man feels that renders him a god. It isn't worth while to stand out for the privilege of being loved after you have ceased to inspire it; you will have enough to do to enforce your right to be constantly loved by being constantly worth it. There is great proneness in men to change for change's sake, and credit the impermanence of their passions to some failure of the object of it, when in fact it is

but the advertisement of their second-rate-ness."

The Young Lady caught her breath in pain. "But isn't it the business of women—just loving?" she ventured after an interval.

"Partly; but much the larger part is inducing the world to love. It is a very wonderful business when you come to think of it, for out of it come martyrdom, poetry and the Joy of Living."

As she spoke the Lady of the Lamp blew on the flame until I heard it singing like the pulse of youth, and the whole fabric of Art stirred outward with her breath like a silken curtain and parted upon ineffable landscapes. The Young Lady recovered a soft enthusiasm.

"I should like that," she admitted,

"being an inspiration." She quite glowed over it.

"So long as you remember," prompted the other, "that it is loving which enkindles the sacred flame, and not being loved merely. No doubt, though, the bearer of the torch gets credit for the conflagration." She laughed. "Love can not create genius, but genius may make of it a bridge, dizzying but competent, by which it climbs to the plane of achievement. Del Sarto's Lucretia was really a very common person and Beatrice was thin blooded."

"Say rather," protested the girl, "that the other men who loved them were common."

"It comes to the same thing," said the goddess; "so it serves to remind you that the Lover and not the Beloved

wrote the Paradiso. Say that love is the force that unlocks the latent possibility. Say it is the torch to endeavour. No amount of being loved answers when the fire and fluid have gone out of your own breast."

"It is so new a way to think of it," sighed the girl.

"That," said the goddess, "is because you are a young lady; men have always understood it, but darkly. When they feel it fail at its accustomed source they go seeking all abroad for it, seeking the lift and urge that keeps them abreast with the world of men. But they seek the body of love without the spirit, and the end of that is desolation."

"So it should be."

"Nay," said Queen Love, "you send them forth to it when the love you love by is as a candle burning in a fair, stain-

less place. But for eating bread by, a rushlight in a hunter's hut is better than a taper on a shrine. Body is the communicating medium of love, and where the bridge is not well looked to you cannot get love over to do its work upon the world."

"Love's work in the world—?"

"Not altogether what the world thinks it, a function merely for the increasing of nations, but a flight into the blue; the dizzying flights by which we momentarily take the heights toward which the nations climb. Your work."

"Ah!" breathed the Young Lady, "you make it hard for us."

"Oh, I? If it seems to you that women have the worst of it, it is because they more than men have grasped, along with it, at offices Love was never meant to fill: replenishing of your purse,

herald of the social standing. I suppose that is what might be expected of a people whose god is conceived to know so little of Love that it is not practised in his presence, but aside and in corners; so little that you dare afford marriage at his altars and trust to his not missing the love that should go to it." She shook with fine irony at the bare notion of it; "but in the old days," said she, "the hearts of men lay all open to the airs of heaven. That was the secret of the Greeks, that they neither loved nor joyed nor avenged themselves except in the eye of the gods. Whatever degree and kind of love they had, spread sunward and was sweetened by the fires of a hundred altars. Man was made glorious when he had a god for all his members."

I must have started forward at that

—the guard's feet scraped at the door. Love took up the Lamp of Life and her station at the fountain. The Young Lady fell a dreaming again and I crept close up under the picture.

"To me; to me!" I urged.

"And what," said Queen Love, "is there between you and me?"

"At any rate," I suggested, "I am not a young lady!"

"Then what would you have of me?"

"Ah," I protested, "it isn't learned so easily as that. Tell me why it is women can not give love, and laugh, and think no more about it, as men do?"

"Because," said she, "love means laughter to men, laughter and delight, but to a woman it has always meant pain and the giving of life. Whatever it means at the moment, ultimately it means that. The seriousness of

woman's love is the backward shadow cast upon it by the pangs of birth."

"A shadow," said I, "at which love is affrighted."

"Listen," said the Lady of the Lamp, stooping divinely, "the burden of your world is not the giving of life but the taking of it. Women bear in haste and anguish that the ranks of battle may be filled. But the War god passes. When the woman who bore three sons for death, bears one for living, then you shall teach men the use of love."

"We thought," said I humbly, "we had learned that, and it was to ease the pain of bearing."

"Nature's use," said she, "and men thought it was for pleasure. I mean the use of the gods: the fine white flash of spirit into spirit, the sowing of soul upon soul and the binding up with the

work of the world of our passionate interactions. Then men shall plant a field or bridge a river by the light that wrote the Paradiso, and two shall love each other by their great achievements."

"And not," said I, "as now by dear embracements?"

"Nay," she smiled, "but by these you shall come to the great adventure. So was it among my Greeks," she said, "but you . . . you have smothered love with so many things that have nothing to do with it: clothes and incomes and traditions. Every now and then the fire eats through and then there is a flare up to all this rubbish of the social expedient. So will it always be until you find the Remedy."

"And that . . .?"

"Is to make over your human society until food and places to live have noth-

ing to do with loving. Then Love will come back to the altars and be holy!"

"Love is the Renewer," she said, "not only of races but of power. It lives by the best things the races have produced, by sympathy, by beauty and vitality. It breeds qualities like these in human achievement . . ." Her voice flared upward and shook as in a wind from high, incorruptible places. There was the shouldering of great seas in it and the tonic spray of the tides that charge the coast of the soul's adventure. Outside there was a sound of crunching gravel; the cool of the afternoon had come and the tourists were coming back to look at the pictures. At the sound the life in them died down as the light of a torch fades from reflecting waters. The guard returned upon his round and the figures lay flat along their canvases. I

went closer under the picture. "Titian painted *you*," I said, "and you have the limitations of your time. Suppose now it were the woman who had a great work to do in the world, that was neither loving nor bearing?" But I knew, in fact, that we had come to the end of Titian's age; we would have to do our own answering.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

I RECALL once that in a season when everybody was asking what had become of the Rains and nobody could tell, I had come up the trail with a friend from the singing, silver beaches, and there where the dunes leave off and the scrub gives place to the chaparral, we found a spray of sea blue ceanothus put forth to bloom untimely. I remember his calling my attention to the spray as he put up his hand to clear it from the trail, and my asking if he thought there was really any difference between that and the process of the primitive mind in the practice of what is called Sympathetic Magic. What I was thinking of was the tremendous urge of desire that betrays man into the quasi-satisfaction of

imitation, and so to the belief that as he himself is happily affected by the performance, so may his friend be or his distant enemy, or the lurking cloud or the tardy harvest.

My friend is a Biologist. That is to say he believes nothing about life that has not been demonstrated in a laboratory, though he will occasionally accept things written in a book, particularly if the Germans have done it. Of all that lies at large in the hearts of men he is profoundly unaware; but when even a Biologist has to admit that the opening and shutting of a pair of tongs in a roomful of bored callers will set them all a yawning, why shouldn't an Australian savage believe he can induce rain by drumming thunder, or a lilac bush hope to invite the belated season by the appearance of its being already

there? Bloom and rain have come together so many times before . . . so many times!

I remember my friend's explanation of it being much what the lilac's might have been, supposing it a very intelligent lilac with a university education, all from the operation of its own insides, the rising of the sap, the seasonal urge welling to meet a belated habitual incentive. But for me the explanation swept dizzying out through the year-long climb of the earth in its elliptic and the compelling march of the sun. Somewhere out beyond the farthest fixed star, a hand had turned on the lever of the world and the sea blue ceanothus answered.

It came back to me here where I found putting forth, amid the dryness of guides and histories, the bloom of un-

forgettable Springs. If I saw Life leaping up in Art—and if the Christian Mythology isn't the most fruitful and formative work of Art Italy has produced, what is it?—how else was I to interpret it but as the reach of habit toward the wave mark of the once-achieved; Life dramatising around the figure of the dreaming Jew, its own illimitable sacrifices, its millenial resurrections.

The week before Easter I found Mariuccia, the padrona, cherishing little baskets of earth in which, by the aid of much sprinkling, pale stalks of grain had sprouted. They were to be taken to church to be put about the body of the sepulchred Christ on Holy Saturday. I didn't tell Mariuccia that they were the same by which all along this

coast had been celebrated the resurrection of Adonis; neither did I mention it to the Biologist. He would have derived the one from the other and discredited both as remnants of pre-Aryan tree worship.

These are the explanations that menace the sources of life. For what is Christ or Orpheus or Adonis but the externalising of the secret conviction of the soul that there is a resurrection? The further you push it back the more periously near to the possibility of its being derived from other and remoter worlds than ours . . . Everywhere I turned, the fabric of the church riddled by superstition, dripped wild honey and the fragrance of the unsheared sod . . .

And unless I found it here, still I

was to seek for the meaning of the Saints which swarmed thicker than primroses in the sun-warmed sod. Wherever the surface of the early church was smit, it put them forth as readily as shoots on a polled willow; and no smallest sprig of Sainthood but was remedial for such pangs as produced him.

Mind I do not say that there is anything particularly difficult about the belief that if a man has once established himself in this life as a Friend of God, he goes on being fruitful and serviceable in the next—provided we can get at him.

I can prove to you very easily that St. Francis lived and was active in the betterment of his time, but when you undertake to demonstrate that these activities have ceased you will find yourself in difficulties. All that you can show

is that St. Francis is no longer using the body which was the medium of his former ministrations.

The least and the most that we know of those who have passed through the experience called dying, is that we don't know anything . . . unless . . . Not that anybody nowadays attempts to deny the wonders worked in the name of the dead. It is the practice of the church before canonisation to collate the evidences and then sit by for God to make the next move. Miracles during life are corroborative; but to get through the veil of sense and flesh, surely that is irrefutable! What prevents the logical conclusion is that just as many and as edifying wonders are wrought by the non-existent, custom-made saints that were never any more in the body than Demeter and Apollo.

In Italy apparently anything that

gets prayed to, answers. This is also true of some other places. I have known the Medicine Man to derive great comfort from a prayer stick, painted and feathered, planted in some high and lonely outpost of the hills, likely haunt of the Powers.

There at least, is a sort of standing ground in the essential condition of Saintship, whether it be of Santa Reparata on her board, or Hercules set up in a Roman town to be the patron of the cattle market; the evidence of a workable communion with the Unseen Forces. It was not any particular kind of thing done that got men called Holy, but the fact that they constituted themselves vessels for the Divine Essence. Then men closed round them protectively because they feared, the vessel be-

ing broken, to lose the inestimable Fluid. Afterward they adorned them with tales as honourific in intent and as silly to our taste as the tinsel decoration of the altars. And if there wasn't a personality at hand to be the frame of that particular blessedness, they made one out of the whole cloth of their desire; calling on power as the lilac called the rain, by the appearance of having it. The point is that long before Peter and Paul brought Christ into Italy, the Romans had learned that if they could isolate, and under one name or another, concentrate on any of the natural, supersensual forces, it could be made to serve them. The more it was called the more it came.

For my part I am willing to believe that this is one of the things that make Italy such a blessed country. Wouldn't

any land be where patience, endurance and might are called upon at a thousand shrines, century by century? Do not doves come where cotes are and lightning draw to its own proper metal? Looked at as a point whereby is induced this divine electrification a saint is a very practical affair. You might think venturesomely after that of connecting up directly with the distributing agent. You hail Deity confidently on your own account.

Beauty, I take it, is the speech of God. . . . The kind of it native to any land must determine the colour which the Deity of that country takes on. Back of the hills of Judea and around Mount Sinai it speaks perhaps of power and eternity and dreadfulness, but here about this sapphire girdled

coast it takes a range and intensity that beleaguers the soul as with a Host. I have known very sober persons to ache intolerably with this clamour of the Unseen at the gates of their untutored sense. Many of them make great mischief of it, fancying themselves poets, —or in love. But the Italians have done much better.

It was somewhere I believed, on the road to Orvieto. There was a day poured full of honey and wine; gold dust of the harvest made the roadways dim. It was a hilly place where the vines all held hands clambering up the steep, and an old olive orchard leaned above a wall. Directly opposite there was such a white niche as holds, all over Italy, the remembrance of Our Lady, but empty, not even dried flowers in a

broken glass to say how long since it had been a shrine.

Up the road to it came a peasant, a good thick fellow who said by the swing of his shoulders and his wide step that affairs went well enough with him. If there were still a few things he desired he felt able to get them for himself. As he came opposite the empty nest of Our Lady, he hesitated, looked about for what the scanty road would yield, stooped for a dropped branch of olive and laid it up where Madonna had been —one of those human motions, just because it has its roots in what is dear and common, impossible to pull up and define. So he would have laid up a branch to Pomona or hung a wreath of briony to Pan. To me it was as if he had jostled the pervasive fluid which announces itself to the consciousness as

Presence, until it broke in a hundred glittering, alluring personalities: Vestas for the hearth, Madonnas for the cradle, nymphs for the reedy pool within the wood and angels for the pacifying stars; the witness of the common officers by which Something without presses in upon us . . . The steadying quality which you touch in the process of being competent for the care of your family, called Saint Joseph . . . The sustenance of study out beyond the end of ways, which might be Jerome . . . or the Muses; the acknowledgment of the buoying force that, when it comes to you of the love of women you call Venus, or by the grace of motherhood, named Mary, and when it strikes you full in the treeless spaces without intervention, you know as the Friend-of-the-Soul-of-Man. A Saint is no more then

than the dramatisation of the soul's adventure with the Unseen.

It is easier so to hand them about stamped like a coin with the image of the occasions by which they came.

It was at Venice finally that they fell into their proper places, not as mere pictorial attitudes of religiosity, but as the Wonder tales of a people. There they have set a snare for the Blessed Personages, all of the fairest plunder of their time. If you have an organ not too atrophied for the appreciation of Blessedness, you will find the trail warm with it right up the plaza under the gold horses of Lysippus into the porch of St. Mark's. And what saint would he be who wouldn't come back just for the satisfying jewel shine of the pillars! They come back. One

would say they flock there from all depleted Italy as though the sea air and the irised light were still the vitalising medium of all great fancies.

Within the church, warm with the stored up veneration of the world, I stretched out my arms—an old involuntary motion—suddenly by the throbbing of my palms I was aware that the Unseen was upon me. I knew very well that they were there, though they were without form or feature.

I know who you are, I said, but *what* are you?

"We are the Called," said they, "by whatever name you know us."

Gods . . . or saints?

"Gods and saints. In the old days they called us by the sea wind and bubbling water, at the dung heap and the cattle market."

And came you for such calling?

"How otherwise? If a man stood before his dung heap and said 'O Stertious, help thou me to fertilise this field,' believing what he said, he was answered."

So mean a service?

"The meaner the nearer to man," said the Presences, though I understood of course that the Romans were a practical people and expected no less of their gods. And does not the latent force of the world reside as much in dung hills as in quartz mountains?

But they said I, "believed it from the gods . . ."

"No matter; they called, and so believing and calling Rome became the mightiest heap of material excellencies in the world, until her faith beat under

it as faintly as a heart encumbered by its own fat. And then," said the Presences, "she fell."

And after?

"Afterward the coil of life turned inward. Then men began to call on us by the names of Long Suffering and Chastity and Sacrifice; and the Help flowed back and made new channels."

You mean by way of the saints and martyrs?

"Why not? A man who has subdued himself and his flesh is as good a conduit as any by whom Power may come. It came to Francis and the Beato Angelico . . . to such others as put themselves in the same mind."

I know . . . I have tried. One does not believe so easily in these days.

"Ah," said they, "neither does one paint so well!"

They were all there about me, from the marbles, the great canvases, the glittering wall pages, bright flecks and foams of that strong tide that drove all down the coast of Italy, and for the moment, without being able to touch it, I perceived the supernal source from which they had sprung.

But where do you go now? I wished to know.

"Some of us," said they, "can do for a while here in Italy. Then we go into the tales the way of the old gods and the Older,—and the children shall hear of us . . . some of us shall become fairy godmothers no doubt, or haunters of the pools of unfrequented woods. Somewhere in the new lands we shall hear a call . . ."

"Calling on Zeus by names of Victory," I said to myself, but to them: I

would I know the name which calls you to my own.

Said they, "One wrestled a night long for that Name and went limping all his days."

I remember . . . by the brook Jabbok. But the Saints found out.

"Ah," said the Unseen, "it was the process of finding out that made them saints. . . ."

But though I aver I limp I have not yet found it.

THE GREEN BOUGH

THERE arrived a day when all this splendour of Cinquecento Christianity appeared to me no more than the gilding on a sarcophagus; and if I unwrapped the bejewelled tissue from the body of that creed, I came upon nothing more inspiring than a mortuary specimen called a *Pietà*. They were so very dead, the dead Christs of the depositions and the sepulchres . . . no doubt it made faith a greater merit to believe that *anything* could come back to revivify those pallid members. I for one did not believe it. And some persistent faculty defended me from accepting the whole fabric of the Resurrection as an allegory. It stayed in my mind as a green bough in the midst of autumnal splendor. What then was it?

Being sick of some other things besides the passions of medieval Christianity, I went out away from Rome to the Villa Hadrian and the garden of the Villa d'Este. There the castings of the pagan soul lie thick as shed petals on the sod; old pains, old raptures, and long sown kisses that come up as little wilding roses against the ruined walls. So much of the precious stuff of life wasted there, the bosom burned against it as at a personal loss.

You believe at Hadrian's Villa that there is never going to be any more love in the world just as at the Vatican you think there can never be any more sculpture, and ache with the pain of loss, which, next to the joy of having it, is the most fructifying passion known.

There is no connection whatever between this and what comes after except

for what every artist knows, that the utmost clarity of vision is the point just beyond loving.

Between Hadrian's Villa and the garden of the Villa d'Este there is an olive orchard roughly terraced about a hill through which the country rock juts awkwardly like the knee joints of age. The orchard is also old: trunks hollowed and split and gnarly boughs upholding a flat leafage which turns white under the morning wind like the smit surface of the sea. From some neighbouring spring a pipe drips water into a stone basin under the ancientest of trees, where, the evening before our passing, the gardener had left his coat hanging. It swung with a life-like motion in the stirring air. But if I had not just come from the perfectest expression in the pointed cypresses and the flat, mala-

chite coloured pools, of the most personal experience, the gardener's coat might have swung out for me, as for my companions, a mere empty garment in the wind. As it was, it swung back like a curtain and showed me all that I knew absolutely and at once that I believed about the *Pietàs*.

It was the season of the green bough. On into the night, emanations from the warm, odorous earth kept the chill from the air, and the sky, steeped in the full Spring Suns, retained almost until dawn, light enough to show the pale undersides of the olive branches where they stirred with the midnight currents. It was not until the hours fell into the very pit of the night that the morning coolness began to strike shivers along

the bodies of those whose business kept them sleeping on the open slopes outside the city walls.

It would have been about that time that he awoke. For more than an hour past he had swung from point to point of consciousness on successive waves of pain; now he was carried almost to the verge of recovery, and now he felt the dragging clutch of the Pit from which hardly he had escaped. By degrees as he was borne toward life his passages in and out of insensibility began to approach more nearly the normal phases of waking and sleeping; the pangs of his body separated from the obsessions of spiritual distress, and recurrent memory began to ply.

It began with the agony in the garden and the falling away of all human

support from that inexplicable wrestling of great souls with foreknowledge, which must always seem to the generality, unnecessary if not a little absurd. More pitiably than all that had rolled between, he felt the empty reach of his affections toward the uncomprehending sleep of his companions. . . . *Could ye not watch with me one little hour!* He remembered the futility of trial, the scoffings and the betrayals, through the crisis of which his quick spirit had lived so long before that at last it broke upon him harmlessly. Pain by pain, his body picked out for him other memories of the way, the cross, the tearing nails . . . more than all else the impotence of purely human impulses under the larger visions which kept him, even in the midst of anguish, profoundly aware of how little they knew the thing they did.

It came back upon him as the stiffness of his wounds, the burden of understanding that loses even the poor human relief of bitterness and blame. As he fell away again into the trough of bodily pain it was to measure the full horror of that drop, which when the racked consciousness that had sustained him in the knowledge of Fatherliness, had failed like a splitten sail, had left him beating blindly in the void. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He came strongly up to life on the anguish of that cry. . . .

Suddenly he put up his hand and touched the cold stones of his sepulchre. He was dead then, and was alive. Lying very still for pure weakness, his spirit returned half unwittingly by the old track and travelled toward God . . . fumblingly as a drowsy child at the

breast, he sucked comfort, the ineffable, divine support. It flowed. Slowly the slacked spirit filled. . . . Power came upon him. God was not dead . . . nor forsaking. . . . He hung upon that and waited for a word. Outside in the dawn dusk a bird awakened by the swaying of his bough in the first waft of the morning, bubbled over with the joyous urge of the Spring. The sound of it filtered through the rock crevices in a thin, clear trickle of song. He laid off the grave cloth and began to feel for the round stone which he knew should close the mouth of the grave. Wounded as he was, it was still no more than men suffer in battle with the cheerful promise of recovery. Calling on those reserves of power for which he had always been remarkable, he applied his shoulder to the stone . . . it yielded

to the pressure and slid along the groove.

He made out the soft bulk of the olive trees all awake and astir to catch the first streak of the morning, and the *tink, tink,* of water falling from a pipe into a stone basin. Following it he came to the fountain from which the garden was watered, and drank and bathed his wounds. He was startled for a moment by the swaying of a garment against him, and then he perceived it to be the gardener's cloak left hanging in the tree, the long, brown hooded garment of the time. He drew its folds around him as a protection against the warning chill of dawn. He was a working man also, and knew the ways of working folk; he groped in the split hollow of the ancient olive tree, and far under the roots behind the gardener's

spade he found a lump of figs tied in a cloth and a common flask which had yet a few swallows of wine in it. When he had eaten and drunk he bound up his feet with the cloth and sat down on the stone bench of the fountain to think what had befallen him.

He was dead—else why had they buried him?—and he was alive again. This then was the meaning of those glimmers and intimations of a life so abundant that he could not imagine even the shock of death to separate him from it. For a long time he had known what he must face if he came up to Jerusalem, yet he had faced it, urged by that inward impulse too deep and imperative for human withstanding . . . and he had died . . . witness the gaping wound in his side . . . and now he walked among the olives. Vestiges and

starts of the broken images of pain and returning consciousness advised him where he had been. He turned his mind deliberately away from that and laid hold on God . . . he was alive again. . . . The currents of the Eternal Being circulated through him with peace and healing.

The dusk of the dawn cleared to ineffable blueness in which the domes and towers of Jerusalem swam, islanded in light. Round about, single high peaks, which still retained the winter whiteness, glowed like outposts of the heavenly host. The gates of the city clattered to let in the hordes of market gardeners with their donkeys, camped since the night before outside the walls, and presently in the cool dimness he saw the women stealing out by a postern and beginning to climb the hill path

toward the place of sepulchres. They came peering through the dawn for they were not certain of any mark by which they should know it, except that it was a new tomb wherein never man was laid. Their voices came up to him clearly through the morning stillness and he knew at once what their errand was when he heard them troubling lest they had come so early there would be no one about to take away the stone from the door; but when they came to the place where it should be, and saw that it was already rolled away, they were amazed and a little afraid. Then Mary, the mother of James and Salome, and the other Mary, put down the spices they had brought, to go and carry word to the disciples, but Mary Magdalene stayed weeping by the sepulchre.

When he saw that she was alone he

went to her and inquired why she wept. She, supposing him to be the gardener, for she saw little because of her weeping and it was not yet full light,—"Oh, sir," she said, "if you have borne him hence, tell me where you have laid him that I may take him away."

"Mary!" he said, and as he spoke he put back the gardener's hood from his head.

"Rabboni," the old title came back half consciously in answer to the tone, and suddenly she saw that it was he, and fell atrembling, for she could not understand but that he was a spirit. She sunk in the wet grass of the orchard, for the quaking of her limbs would not sustain her.

"Why seek ye the living among the dead?" he questioned with the old tender irony, but she scarcely heard him.

She worked toward him on her knees; tremblingly her hands went out to touch the beloved feet, half to prove it were his very self or a vision of thin air.

"Nay, touch me not, Mary," he drew back with the sensitiveness of the newly wounded. "I am not yet ascended to my father," he assured her as he raised her from the ground.

Louder now they heard the stir of Jerusalem awake, and knew that the broadening day might soon bring the rabble about them. When he had questioned her a little hurriedly concerning the state of the city and his disciples, he bade her tell them to come to him in Galilee in a place known to them of old, and so saying drew the folds of his cloak about him and went down by the hill trail away from Jerusalem.

It was twilight of the same day when he came near to the village of Emmaus and heard the cheerful barking of the dogs and the lowing of the cattle at the byres. There was a good Spring smell of tillage in the inlets of the hills and the cry of the night-jar shaken out over the stony places in a shrill fine spray of sound. Half an hour from the village he came upon two who had followed him up to Jerusalem in the beginning of Passover, and as they walked they reasoned together concerning things that had come to pass there. When he had entered into conversation he saw that they were sad, and inquired of them the reason for it; and they, taking him for a stranger, told him how but a short time since there had gone a man up to Jerusalem with a great company, preaching the Kingdom of

Heaven at hand, and what had been done to him by the authorities.

"But," said they, "we trusted it had been he who should redeem Israel."

"O slow of heart," cried he, "that you believe not what the prophets have spoken!"

All day as he had come, against the pangs of his torn body, his spirit had beat up toward God with the rhythm of his walking, calling on Power by all the names of Jehovah, until he went veiled in it as in a cloud which now by the mere added effort of communication, burst into splendour. But a few days since he had walked up to Jerusalem battling in the midst of the presages of betrayal and disaster, with the incomplete revelation of Messiahship. This morning waking at once to a knowledge of the practical defeat and to a new and

extraordinary security of Divine continuance, he had felt his way like a true Hebrew, back through the maze of intimations by the words of the Prophets; starlighted sayings shot like meteors across the dark of Israel's history. They lighted far inward past the shames and consternations of the crucifixion.

This then was the Kingdom; not the overthrow of one form by another, but the flux of all forms, empires, pomps, societies, in the eternal facts of existence . . . the redemption of life from the bondage of Things. He was dead and was alive again.

How indeed was a Messiahship to prove its divine origin by merely setting up in the room of thrones and principalities? Say rather the last word as to the futility of the Kingdoms of the World was pronounced when they

wrecked themselves against its immortal quality.

As he held up the events of the last few days to the familiar scriptures, new meanings came out in them like secret writing held before a flame, and as he talked, the hearts of his companions burned within them. As they drew near to their house the speaker made as if he would have gone further, but they urged that he should come in to supper, for the way was hard and the dark had fallen. So as they sat at table, still talking, the mistress of the house set food before them and a little oil-fed lamp. Then the guest put back the hood from his head and stretching forth his hand broke the bread and blessed it as was his custom, and at once they knew him, but for very fear and astonishment they spoke neither to him nor

to one another. As soon as he saw that he was recognised he rose and went forth from them, disappearing in the night.

So little anticipated by his disciples had been the overthrow of the Messianic hope, that the stroke of it fell upon them like a wolf upon the flock. It scattered them into nooks and corners, into the hill places and villages round about Jerusalem, there to huddle, pressing together for relief from consternation, loath to believe that the miraculous powers which had so often served them, had failed him on his own account, and wholly unable to accept the whispered word brought by the women from the sepulchre. He was gone; power and personality, his body even risen or spirited away. All during that day

there had been fearful stealers about the precincts of the burial place for a view of the deserted tomb, stealing back again to whisper and wonder or to handle the dropped grave cloth which lay treasured in the house of Mary. And now, here were two come back from Emmaus with extraordinary new proof of a resurrection, which when they had heard it neither did they believe. But as they sat together talking of these things secretly behind shut doors for fear of authorities, he of whom they spoke, advised by that mysterious inward leading that his name passed among them with the old reverent tenderness, sought them out by it, and while they were yet speaking appeared among them. Wounded and pale from his vigils and his pains, the voice of his customary salutation struck terror

through them. There were men there who had unbound him dead, as they believed, from the cross and bestowed him in the tomb!

"Behold my hands and feet," he said, "handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones." But seeing they hung yet between terror and wonder, he understood that they still supposed that they had seen a spirit. Then he sat at table and asked that he be served with what food they had, the broiled fish and honey in the comb upon which they had been at supper, talking quietly the while. Seeing him eat they grew assured, and as they began to realise that he was with them in flesh, they were glad.

Afterward, he came to them a second time in like manner, and Thomas who had doubted, being absent on the for-

mer occasion, put his finger in the print of the nails and his hand upon the wounded side and was convinced. By such simple means as they were able to receive, he made them to know that he was the very man whom with their own hands they had laid away, in no wise changed or altered. But of the new meaning which his life had taken on by the fact, he spoke very little, for their minds were not opened to it, neither was it at all times and altogether plain to himself.

In the hills beyond the sea of Tiberias there was a hut built in a secret and solitary place by one of those wild anchorites not infrequently met with in the borders of Judea. None knew of it except, perhaps, a runaway slave or two, and shepherds who used it at lambing

times. Here in the beginning of his ministry he had drawn apart for seasons of prayer and meditation, that the Word might be plain in him; here then, he remained resting on God, subsisting in the body by what the hills afforded and by the gifts of a few poor followers who had their homes hereabout, as yet scarcely apprised of the tragic termination of his mission to Jerusalem. Here he saw the passing of the Rains, and flowers come out flame-like on low spiney shrubs; wandering shepherds went by him with their new-washed flocks, and whiter clouds led flockwise in the draws between the hills. . . . By all these things knowledge flowed in to him.

He saw with chastening how it was that he, so near at all times to the Divine mind, should suffer these things. Ly-

ing so close there, as a child to its parent, he had been pushed off, the better to measure its reach and fulness. He had clung to that breast which in his ministry had nourished him, until torn from it by betrayals, mockings, tortures of his body, he had dropped despairingly into the gulf of death, and lo, he was fallen into the lap of God! "The Kingdom of Heaven is in the midst of you," he had said to his disciples and now suddenly he had discovered it in the midst of himself—this profound inward clutch upon Being, from which not the breaking of his body could divide him. He saw himself with all men, beasts, sticks and stones, mere warp of nature through which the spirit shuttles, drawn out from God but not dissevered, returning through all these, even through death, with Consciousness and

Joy. In this was the remission of sins, that they had no more power to hold the fluent being than glory or delight or the trumpery of Kings.

Here in the weakness of shock and wounds, much that had perplexed him in his own life, the fulness of Power straining at his human limitations, came out clearly like the contour of a coast at ebb tide, but it left him more than ever groping for that communicating touch by which the gained knowledge could be made serviceable to men.

"As my father hath sent me," he had said to his disciples when his new found resistance to wounding and the malice of men was at flood, "even so I send you." Now as his body frailed before the inundation of revelation, he yearned for Peter and that John whom he had loved, all the company of humble folk

who had heard him gladly, following up to Jerusalem trustfully as the great bands of sheep that passed him almost daily, roving the Galilean hills at the heels of the shepherd.

How was he to reach them now, scattered and leaderless, with the significance of his persistence in the body which, the range of his vision being fixed too far upon the inward revelation to examine much into immediate fact, he accepted at its humanest interpretation. Lying close in the cover of the hills he sent out his thoughts in a strong cry toward his best loved disciples, and Peter and John, and the others heard him. They heard him inwardly but read it so humanly awry that they made excuse to one another that they went a-fishing. They entered into the fishing boats and all night, though they caught noth-

ing, they beat toward the coast where the cry was; and when it was early light they heard his very voice calling to them that they should cast in their net on the side where he had seen the silver schools flashing under the morning mist. When Peter knew the voice he girt on his fisher's coat and came ashore through the shallows, for they were close in, and he had the quickest faith of all the twelve.

Then the others came in with the nets full to breaking, and found that he had made a fire, for the nights along the lake borders were chill, and prepared bread. So they took fish and broiled it and broke their fast together as they had done so many times before, when in the beginning of his ministry, he had often no other food than the shared bread of the working people. The nat-

uralness of the morning meal restored to them a little of their former reverent familiarity, and served as the medium by which he undertook to lay upon them the obligation of the gospel which he could now no more in this frame and presence preach about the world.

Of this he seems to have been certain. Daily as he reached inward on great tides of prayer for the word born of his late experience, he was aware of being carried so far out of his wracked body that it was inevitable that he should finally leave it there tumbled like weed along the shore of Things. Beyond that episode lay the full light for which he panted more than a hart for the waterbrook.

It was the singularity of that personal prescience which had informed his career, that though it led him step by

step, glancing aside for the moment to foresay the behaviour of his immediate companions, it seemed never to apprise him how far they missed the essentials of his message. He had known, evidently, how his visit to Jerusalem must terminate; he seems now to have understood that his further usefulness must wait upon the dropping off of the tortured frame which he had brought up through the tomb with him, but he missed knowing how to convey to the remnant of his disciples who came together about him in the hills, the spiritual values of his return.

He failed, perhaps because he was not himself yet sure that it might not come that way, to rid them of the expectation of Jewish Autonomy; he was concerned, as always, with the preaching of his Word, rather than what came

of it. On this morning the flocks rounding the lake fronting hills, furnished the figure of his admonition.

"Feed my sheep," he said to Peter, and again; and then "Feed my lambs." One thing he had not brought back out of the tomb with him was the fear by which his church was afterward corrupted, that the Truth of God could not be trusted to do its perfect work in man.

On a mountain, in a place appointed for them, he flamed forth with that message, the faint, misread recollection of which as it lay in the minds of his disciples, has become the ultimate hope of all our science and all untoward questionings—the assurance of the supremacy of Spirit, the extension through union with the Divine, of man's will

over disease and troubling. What they got from it chiefly was the certainty of the continuance of his personal power. "For, lo, I am with you alway," he said, "even to the end of the world." It was the green bough preserved to them in the denuding blasts of human experience.

That they did not treasure more these last words, preserve them with that meticulous accuracy for which that body of religionists from whom they were shorn by the sword of Christ's teaching, were notable, was due in part to their having no apparent belief in this being the last. They had seen him in the flesh, they expected to see him in the flesh again. Nothing else could account for the boldness with which these timid and easily shaken peasant souls faced so soon again the possibility of

persecution and death in that Jerusalem whither he had told them to await the confirming visitation of the Spirit. They faced it. They went while the city still rang with the story of his defeat, to confirm his triumph; they preached what they had seen and known.

It seems likely then, that on that last occasion when he went with them a little way on the road they should take, that they had no notion that it was the last they should see of him in the body. "Lord," said they, "dost thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" "It is not for you to know times and seasons," he reminded them. In his own time he should come again and in no other guise than Counsellor and Friend. When he had blessed them they saw him pass up the hill trail to-

ward his chosen place and the mountain mists receive him.

Afterward in the long time when they expected him in vain, they said, in the manner of speaking of that country, that he had ascended to Heaven, so that long afterward it came to be reported that they had watched him ascending there in the company of clouds of angels. But so long as they lived who had seen him, they looked out for him every day . . . any knock at the door . . . any solitary figure on the hill paths about Bethany . . . For they had laid him in the tomb, and he had come to them in the very flesh.

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